

I Served the Pope



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DEDICATION

To the thousands of students of the Catholic Schools of America, whom I have addressed in these past two years, as a token of appreciation and gratitude for their interest and enthusiasm in my work *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*.

Were I permitted to bestow a title, a new title, upon the boys and girls who promised, following my lectures, to pray more and better for the Holy Father, I would call them THE SPIRITUAL SWISS GUARDS.

" . . . what a massive testimony you present to the faith of your mothers and fathers, to their spirit of self-denial and generosity in safeguarding that faith for you . . . "

Pope Pius XII, February 19, 1947
To the Students of the Catholic
Schools of the United States.



← *Captain Gahlinger introduces a group of Protestant
Generals to Pope Pius XII in private audience.*

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"They, therefore, walk in the path of dangerous error who believe that they can accept Christ as the Head of the Church, while not adhering loyally to His Vicar on earth. They have taken away the visible head, broken the visible bonds of unity and left the Mystical Body of the Redeemer so obscured and so maimed, that those who are seeking the haven of eternal salvation can neither see it nor find it."

Pope Pius XII, from the Encyclical
Letter *MISTICI CORPORIS*.
Vatican Poliglotta translation.

INTRODUCTION

The Swiss Guard in the Vatican is a symbol of fidelity. For more than four hundred years the sons of my native Switzerland have served the highest authority in this world. They have served in good days and in bad; they have been ready to give their young lives for the Vicar of Christ, and that was heroic. They have been and they are constantly serving Him in the simple daily duties throughout the years, and that is perhaps more heroic.

This book aims to show the life of a young Swiss Guard from the beginning of his service to the moment that he lays aside the sword, leaves the sanctuary of the Vatican, to take up the spiritual weapons to defend the Holy Father throughout the world.

Like the one hundred and fifty young Swiss who rushed to the defense of Pope Julius II many centuries ago and became the nucleus of the Swiss Pontifical Army, the Swiss Guard of today must become the heart of a group which will strive again for the title of honor: "Defensores libertatis Ecclesiae — Protectors of the freedom of the Church." These Guards of the twentieth century must be the "crack troops" of Catholicity gathered under the standard of Catholic Action which is guided by the priests under the direction of the God-given authority of each diocese — the Bishop.

It is a pleasure to take this opportunity to thank those whose understanding and encouragement during these past two years have helped in my endeavor "to bring the Holy Father closer to people and people closer to the Holy Father."

It may well be that the time will come when I can publish this same book with a new title. The title:

I SERVED A SAINT!

HISTORY OF THE SWISS GUARD

Immortalized in art as Moses in Michelangelo's famous statue, Pope Julius II ruled the Church of Christ from 1503 to 1513. A man of indomitable courage and unlimited energy, known to his contemporaries as "il terribile," Pope Julius included in his program of government the restoration and consolidation of the Papal States. As a means of carrying on such a program, he founded the Swiss Guard in 1505.

At this time the armies of foreign princes occupied and devastated large territories of the temporal possessions of the Church. In the south, Spain had taken Naples and Sicily; in the north, France was constantly struggling to extend her influence, while Venice was attacking the possessions of the Holy See in the Romagna. It was imperative that the Papal states be freed from the bondage of foreign tyranny. Julius II, determined to do this, gave the order, "*Fuori i barbari — Away with the barbarians.*"

He saw the necessity of recruiting soldiers as personal bodyguards. The Swiss, at that time, were at the height of military renown, fighting as mercenaries "against all flags," and held as invincible infantrymen. From 1497, the king of France had had a hundred Swiss Guards in his service.

Before that, in 1476 they had defeated the dreaded Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy. On December 28 in 1478, a hundred and seventy-five Swiss were attacked near Giornico in the Tessin by a Milanese army. Supported by about four hundred inhabitants of the valley, they defended themselves fearlessly against an army of ten thousand men, mostly knights. Like their heroic ancestors at Morgarten, they made nature their ally. Suddenly rocks thundered down from the mountains and created a terrible confusion among the enemy's cavalry. At this decisive moment, the Swiss attacked the enemy, more than fifteen times their own strength, and defeated them. News of this victory carried the military renown of the Swiss far into the south. Even the famous statesman Machiavelli says in his book *Il Principe* that the Swiss "are 'liberissimi ed armatissimi — very free and very well armed,' and that they can be defeated only by an infantry as brave as their own."

Julius II, capable strategist that he was, knew that too. He sent a delegation to Switzerland for the purpose of enlisting two hundred soldiers. The negotiations were difficult and prolonged. Service with

the French, with its promise of military promotions and spoils, was more attractive to the energetic young soldiers than monotonous sentry duty with the Pope.

Other difficulties militated against the negotiations. There was a growing sentiment against mercenary service. Death was too often the fate of fathers and sons on distant battlefields. Often compatriots, sometimes even brothers, found themselves in hostile camps, opposing each other in battle. One such incident is significant for inclusion here. A soldier in battle was pressed hard by a fighter from the enemy's side. For a fleeting moment, he thought that the face seemed familiar. However, in the heat of combat, he had no time to look close; he had to fight for his life. He saved it, only to find that the breast he had pierced was that of his own brother.

At the time that Julius II was negotiating with the Swiss, there lived a man in Switzerland who tried vehemently to prohibit mercenary service. He was Bruder Klaus, my country's first canonized saint. Again and again, he warned the Swiss to live in peace. "Peace is always in God, for God is peace. And peace can never be destroyed, but discord is destroyed. That is to say: Peace is stronger than war, for the sources of peace are higher than those of war; and love, at the end, is stronger than hate." Such was the message of Bruder Klaus — father, farmer, and soldier; patriot and statesman; hermit, mystic, and miracle worker — the man who became "father of our fatherland." As captain of the Swiss Guard, it was my personal pleasure and privilege to assist at the canonization of this great man in May of 1947.

Despite all the opposition, Pope Julius II, in 1505, founded the Swiss Guard with one hundred and fifty soldiers instead of the desired two hundred. On the twenty-second of January, 1506, they marched through the Porta del Popolo into Rome. According to the historian Pastor, their officers brought the best families of Switzerland into close and confidential relationship with the Holy See.

Immediately, the Guards were assigned to duty in all important enterprises of Pope Julius II. They formed a permanent central body, serving as nucleus for a larger army when additional troops were needed. Such an opportunity occurred in 1512 when the life of the Pope and the possessions of the Church were in grave danger. At that time, eighteen thousand Swiss defeated, in a series of battles, all the enemies of the Church. In gratitude, Julius II bestowed on the Swiss in perpetuity the title "Protectors of the liberty of the Church" and sent them two large banners with his coat of arms.

Zwingli, the Protestant reformer, at that time still a faithful son of the Catholic Church, wrote, "The Swiss have seen the deplorable state to which the Church of God, the Mother of Christendom, has been reduced, and they think it both wrong and dangerous to permit these rapacious tyrants to remain unpunished."

It may very well be said that the Swiss with this action, wrote one of the finest pages of any history book — a page of fidelity to the Vicar of Christ.

Twenty years after the foundation of the Swiss Guard, Clement VII's unhappy policy involved him in a war with Charles V. On May 5, 1527, a great army of Spaniards, Italians, and Germans under the leadership of the brave Charles of Bourbon stood before the walls of Rome. There was but one alternative for the starved mercenaries — to storm the city or to mutiny. Bourbon knew that.

In dense fog, the city was attacked on the morning of May 6. The attack was driven back. The general himself was killed. But his soldiers rushed after him and took the wall in a tremendous fury. Friend and enemy, says Pastor in his famous history of the Popes, were moving in a murderous hand-to-hand fight toward St. Peter's. There the Swiss Guards stood in hedgehog position ready for the defense. In the evening, one hundred and forty-seven of the Guards lay dead in their colorful uniforms in front of the basilica and around the tomb of St. Peter. Forty-two of them managed to rescue the Pope by guiding him through a covered passage into the Castle of St. Angelo. Reluctant to flee at first, he was urged by those in his court. A chronicle relates that if he had stayed another three Credos he would have been killed.

History recounts the terrible massacre that followed. After a siege of one month, Pope Clement in the Castle of St. Angelo, was forced to surrender. The Swiss Guard was abolished and replaced by two hundred German mercenaries. However, twenty years later, in 1548, it was re-founded by Pope Paul III.

In remembrance of the heroic death of the Swiss Guard, a swearing-in ceremony of new recruits take place each year on the sixth of May. Early in the morning, the young soldiers help one another into their historic armor. These suits of armor are the originals worn by the predecessors of the Guard for centuries and have traditionally been put on for great occasions.

At nine o'clock the corps marches to the Belvedere court of the Vatican with drummers and pipers and the Guard flag. A thousand invited guests have gathered — ambassadors, ministers, foreign officers, high prelates, representatives from other corps, pilgrims from Switzerland. The oath reads as follows:

"I swear to serve well and loyally His Holiness, the reigning Pope and his lawful successor, to risk my life for his defense, as well as to take this obligation upon me toward the Holy College of cardinals for the duration of vacancy of the Holy See.

"I further promise due military respect to the commander of the guard and all officers and other ranks, precise and punctual obedience toward their orders, and strict discipline. I finally swear to keep everything which the honor of a Swiss guard demands, and that I do not belong to a secret society."

This is the oath. The guard advances to the flag, seizes the flagpole with his left hand, lifts the right hand with three outstretched fingers (thumb, forefinger, and middle finger), and after the reading of the oath he says in a loud clear tone in his mother tongue (the German Swiss in German and the French Swiss in French):

"I swear to keep everything which has just been read to me, conscientiously and loyally, so help me God and his saints!"

Well do I remember my swearing-in ceremony on May 6, 1940. To me, it was a *Second Confirmation*!

To return now to the history of the Swiss Guard, let us consider its fate and activity during the four hundred years following the sacking of Rome. One might ask this question, "Has the Swiss Guard had to shed blood for Church and Pope during these four centuries?" Those years have been years of peace, disturbed only now and then by the clamor of revolution and arms. Highlights in that history are recorded here:

February 6, 1548: Guard newly formed.

October 7, 1571: Thirteen guards serve as body guards of Papal Admiral Marcantonio Colonna in Battle of Lepanto, thus participating as representatives of Switzerland and the Guard in one of the most famous victories of Christian Europe.*

- February 17, 1798: Swiss Guard disarmed by French troops on St. Peter's Square; Pius VI leaves the Vatican and dies the following year; Guard dissolved.
- 1800: Pius VII, the new pope, comes to Rome to ascend throne of St. Peter. He is immediately surrounded by thirty-six guards who had stayed in the city until a new pope would hire them. Pius VII re-establishes the Guard.
- July 7, 1800: French disarm the Guard in the Quirinal. Pope has forbidden them to fight. He is taken prisoner and brought to Fontainebleau. Most of Guards go to Switzerland; some remain in Rome.
- May 24, 1814: Napoleon dethroned. Pius VII returns to Rome. Guard re-established; they make sacrifices in same way as the Pope.

*" . . . the inmost sea of all the earth was shaken with his ships. (The Sultan's).
 They have dared the white republics up the capes of Italy,
 They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the Sea,
 And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony and loss,
 And called the kings of Christendom for swords about the Cross."
Lepanto—G. K. CHESTERTON.

And now we reach the present. A simple monument in the court of honor of the guards' quarters forms the historical link of the corps of today with the heroes of the Sack of Rome. It represents the wounded captain stubbornly resisting the enemy in the midst of dying comrades. "Pro Fide ac Virtute—For Faith and Virtue" is chiselled into the travertine. Pius XI personally dedicated the monument on October 20, 1927, in the presence of representatives of the Swiss army and government.

This monument reminds every guard of the words of Goethe: "What thou hast inherited from thy sires, acquire it so as to possess it as thy own." To be equal in fidelity and sense of duty to their forefathers is the serious endeavor of each officer and guard of today. Probably, there will be no great combats giving him an opportunity to prove his soldier's oath, but the loyal fulfillment of his daily duties is hardly a less heroic deed. Thus the way of a Swiss Guard is the "little way" of the Little Flower.

RECRUITING

What is it that brings the Swiss Youth to serve the banner of the Pope?

In the course of the last centuries it was held the greatest honor to give some of the best years of one's youth to the highest leader of the Catholic Church. In a world poisoned with materialism and spiritual anarchy, this small group of people embodies unconditional and unlimited devotion to a higher ideal.

In normal times there is no lack of prospective recruits. Let us take as typical of these a young Vallais. In that particular canton, service in the Swiss Guard is a family tradition generations old. Older comrades, the parish priest, or his relatives have told the young man about the Guard and encouraged him to enlist. The candidate addresses his application to the commander who decides upon the acceptance according to rules laid down by Pius X on March 19, 1914.

The commander makes inquiries of the local secular and ecclesiastical authorities concerning the origin and reputation of the applicant. He must fulfill these conditions:

1. The candidate must be born a Swiss citizen.*
2. He must be a practising Catholic, enjoy an excellent reputation, and come from an honorable family.
3. He must be between eighteen and twenty-five years of age and have gone through Swiss military basic training.
4. He must possess full physical and mental health and stand at least five feet eleven inches in his stocking feet.
5. He must not engage in outside employment.
6. He may not marry while he is in the service of the Pope. Only the officers can be married.

This last requirement is often criticised, but it will not be altered in the future. From the material standpoint, the problems of accommodation,

*Guards are Swiss in every particular and not just in name. Despite this regulation, there are many Romans who ask again and again whether the sentries at the gates of the Vatican are really Svizzeri and not Lombardi or Toscani.

board, payment, and education of children would, particularly in times of war and scarcity, seriously threaten the continuation of the corps. However, higher motives are no less decisive. The Guard is a means to the final aim of the young man and not an end in itself. His aim is self-improvement which will lead to a reliable subsistence and the foundation of his own family. His progress toward this goal is marked by a serious study of vocational, social, and political problems.

Thus the Swiss Guard in the Vatican, always renewed by the young generation of soldiers, remains young itself. It must do this, as it serves the eternally young world Church.

The candidate for the Guard, after he has fulfilled entrance conditions, must apply to military authorities for permission to go abroad. This regulation applies to all Swiss citizens eligible for military service who wish to go abroad for more than three months. Furthermore, according to the Swiss military penal code, no Swiss is permitted to take foreign military service. The Federal Council, which could give the permission, refrains from granting it in consideration of Switzerland's declaration of neutrality. However, Guard service in the Vatican is permitted because of the completely non-belligerent position of that State.

Service done in the Vatican is not considered as military service in Switzerland. While in Rome, the Swiss citizen has to fulfill his duty of military service at home by paying the military tax. Officer's ranks and men's grades in the Guard are not recognized in the Swiss army, and vice versa.

The distinctions awarded to the Guard in the Vatican must not be worn in the Swiss army. The Swiss army does not know any distinctions as are customary in other armies.

Guards at the Vatican remain in service from one to twenty years. They are under no obligation to remain for any definite period of time. If a guard leaves the service after ten, fifteen, or twenty years, he receives a life-time pension.

CHAPTER III

LINE-UP!

Let us assume that our candidate has completed all conditions. He has been medically examined by the physician of the command and found physically and mentally able. He next receives marching orders.

Quite true it is that we Swiss are enthusiastic about going abroad. At the moment, there are about half a million Swiss in all parts of the world, including those possessing two citizenships. But it is also true that we Swiss living abroad are always much attached to our country and feel great affection and devotion for it. But then, how could anyone forget Switzerland!

The day of departure comes. The boy feels a little strange as he shakes his father's rough hand and hears words similar to those which Polonius gave to the departing Laertes:

*"This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee"*

HAMLET I, 3.

Friends come to the station — young mountaineers, sprightly peasant sons. They say very little, but all the heartier is the handshake, and all the friendlier the goodbye to their departing comrade. As the train moves slowly out of the narrow valley, the boy stands at the window looking at the mountains, as if he had never seen them before. And as he stands there, he repeats their names to himself in a low voice.

The frontier is behind him; the train moves toward the plains country. The lower it goes, the higher the mountain range rises like an ice-clad castle in the evening sky. For the first time, the young man understands the meaning of "fatherland."

Then after several hours — Roma Termini! With great astonished eyes, he observes the busy comings and goings in the main station of Rome. For the first time in his life, he who at home knows every child in the valley, feels what it is to be submerged in the crowd. All faces are cold and strange to him; people rush past each other without recognition. How grateful he is to see some of his new comrades at the station!

With them, he gets a taxi and drives across the Piazza Esedra, the Via Nazionale, and the Piazza Venezia, past the National Monument, to the Tiber, and then they turn into Via della Conciliazone. For the first time he sees St. Peter's, the greatest church of the world . . . and he is almost a little disappointed. From books, magazines, and accounts he has heard, he had imagined the basilica still more magnificent. Reason for disappointment, he soon learns, is that the cupola is covered by the nave and the impressive facade. It won't be long, however, until he will

be astounded at the tremendous scale, when he walks through the six hundred and sixty foot long nave and climbs the four hundred foot high dome, when he has admired the giant "putti" at the fonts that look like small boys, and has explored a little the interior of the church with all its details.

In a wide circle, Bernini's colonnades with their statues of saints, embrace St. Peter's Square and, symbolically, the whole world. In the shade of the colonnades, part of the daily life is lived. Here boys romp; there a mother nurses her child, a cabman snoozes, or an old man clumsily counts olives into a paper bag. As the cab moves on, the recruit and his friends see the four thousand year old obelisk, the only one in Rome which has not been toppled over by the storms of centuries, and which once looked down on the first Roman martyrs as a silent witness in the days of Nero and his circus. The great bronze ball, which once crowned its summit and, according to legend held Caesar's ashes, has been replaced by the cross.

They leave the cab and walk the last part of the way. Deep in thought, they look up at the obelisk which once might have thrown its shadow on Moses and Christ and which towers into the sky in front of the Cathedral of the Prince of Apostles, in the world's most beautiful square, a mighty *sursum corda*. By its sides, the fountains are rippling day and night.

Like a giant pencil, the obelisk has written into the book of world history in indelible letters that sentence of eternal truth that Church and Papacy may be persecuted until ruthless death but will not perish. That same truth is expressed, too, by the words chiselled into the granite of the socle:

*"Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat.
Christus plebem suam ab omni malo defendat."**

*"Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules. Christ will defend his people from all evil."

Considering these words, the recruit mounts the steps leading to the Bronze Gate, the main entrance of the papal palace which is watched day and night by a Swiss Guard. He is brought to the quarters and shown by a N.C.O. into a friendly spacious room with half a dozen beds. On the wall, in beautiful colorprints he finds again the comrades he left only yesterday — the mountains of Switzerland. He makes himself comfortable and has a good rest.

At this point it might be interesting to know that the whole Guard has the right of free accommodation in the Vatican. The new Swiss

quarters were built in 1862 by Pius IX and were extended and modernized in 1933 by Pius XI. Officers have their own spacious flats in a palace, where there are also administrative offices. Here they live with their families. Each N.C.O. has a separate room in the barracks, a modernly furnished building, whereas halberdiers live in double rooms. Everyone arranges his room according to his taste. He has his radio, his bookshelf, and naturally, on the wall, by the side of the photos of his family, some good picture of Swiss mountain peaks.

In order to become accustomed to the general order, the recruit stays for the first few months in the common recruit's room, called *California*, where half a dozen beginners live together. There is much happiness and good will in this dormitory. Swiss songs are sung; now and then the rough wooden table is laid festively, and the recruits secretly invite their older comrades to a glass of wine, even to a simple banquet. "Antichambre" is what the guards call these secret reunions. (The real Antichambers are the rooms where the Holy Father receives pilgrims.)

CHAPTER IV THE NEW LIFE

So interesting is the first day of the new life in the Vatican that I shall take it in detail.

Breakfast is served at seven-fifteen. It is simple and nourishing, very much like breakfast at home. There is milk and coffee, bread, butter, cheese or jam, just as in Switzerland, except that Italian cows seem to give thinner milk than Swiss cows! Brothers of Mercy from Trier do the cooking for the Guards. In general, the meals are like Swiss meals except that oil is used. Very soon, the young men learn to like the fine spaghetti, Ravioli and Risotto!

At 8 o'clock holy Mass is celebrated every day in the Guard's chapel. On week days there is no obligation to attend Mass, but most of the guards do so as a matter of course. Everyone knows Whom he is serving and that this service of honor necessitates not only soldierly qualities and military drill, but also a source of deepening of faith which must never run dry.

In the month of May, holy Mass is followed by devotions to our Lady. In her, the Guard finds the ideal of womanly purity, beauty, and motherliness. To her, he devotes his youth, energy, and manhood. During the time of his service in the Guard, Mary takes the place of his own distant mother. To one who does not understand, this may sound too

ideal to be real, but it is true. The teaching of chivalry toward women and particularly the deeper penetrating into the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ is taken care of at the fortnightly reunions of the Sodality, where often world-famous missionaries address the Guard. This congregation, certainly one of the most beneficial institutions in the centuries-old history of the Corps, is the meritorious innovation of its present chaplain. As a member of the Sodality, the corpsman becomes, according to Pope Pius XII, "the minister, the knight of the blessed Virgin, and as such he sanctifies himself."

All those who know the Holy Father are deeply impressed by his personal love of the Blessed Virgin. He calls her "Mater noster dulcissima — Our Most Sweet Mother." He prays to her before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which stands in his bedroom; and it is a very touching experience when, at noon, he kneels down with his visitors and says the Angelus with them. In the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, he movingly prays Mary to "throw about the Church today as in times gone by, the mantle of her protection. . ."

The Holy Father's devotion to Mary dates from his infancy. Seventy-six years ago, when Eugenio Pacelli was just five years old, he came in late for supper one evening to face a motherly scolding. "But Mamma," the future Pope said, "I have been to see the picture of the Madonna; I pray and tell her everything."

Under such a leader, there is no need to wonder that the members of the Swiss Guard come closer and closer to Mary, of whom Dante spoke,

*"Lady, thou art so great and hast such worth, that if
there be one who would have grace yet betaketh not
himself to thee, his longing seeketh to fly without
wings."*

PARADISO, XXXIII, 13-16

As late as January 21, 1945, our Holy Father, in his famous address to the Congregations of Our Lady, said, "Finally, close, very close to Us, in the Sodality of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Swiss Guard, you all are in a certain manner represented day and night near Our person."

Love of Mary and loyalty to Her lends the Swiss Corps in the Vatican a helping hand toward soldierly bravery and youthful preparedness. . . Yes, the Swiss Guard, which protects Our Lady's Pope, is and will remain in fact Our Lady's Guard. Very early in his new life at the Vatican, the young guard learns this.

With surprise and with pleasure, the recruit observes everything about the Vatican. Particularly in religious activity he finds his home again, the dear customs of his Alpine valley. The big city at first appeared so strange and forbidding to him. The language and the character of this foreign nation separated him from life within it, as if by an unbridgeable abyss. It is Holy Mass, which he will often attend in the beautiful baroque churches in the city, which links this new and utterly different life with his own. The Holy Father, the cardinals, and the simple parish priest in the city celebrate the Mass in exactly the same way as the parish priest at home, high up in the mountains. Thus a young guard once said enthusiastically, when he came from holy Mass in one of the Roman churches that he had heard a German word again after a long time. It was "Dominus vobiscum."

After holy Mass, the young recruit goes to the office of the commander. This person belongs to the so-called Anti-camera Nobile of the Pope, that is to say to the group of people nearest the Holy Father. He has, therefore, a special place in the procession and at solemn audiences. For the period of his office he has the title of a privy chamberlain.

In the commander's office, the recruit notices the flag of the Guard which hangs on the wall, behind the writing-desk. It is divided by a white cross into four equal fields, one of which shows the coat-of-arms of the presently reigning Pope, another the coat-of-arms of the founder of the Swiss Guard, Julius II, and the two remaining the colors of the corps. At great festive occasions, the flag waves over the main sentry at the Bronze Gate. On May 6, recruits are sworn in on that flag. According to tradition, the first sergeant is at the same time ensign of the Guard.

After being welcomed by the commander, the young man is examined by the first sergeant to ascertain whether he really has the required minimum height of five feet, eleven inches. In the sergeant's office, he notices various charts, one of which shows the strength of the Corps. According to this chart, (based on the rules laid down on March 19, 1914), the full strength of the Swiss Guard is 133 men:

- 1 captain in the rank of colonel
- 1 lieutenant in the rank of lieutenant colonel
- 1 second lieutenant in the rank of major
- 1 chaplain in the rank of captain
- 2 lieutenants in the rank of captains
- 1 esente in the rank of captain

- 1 first sergeant in the rank of lieutenant
- 4 sergeants in the rank of second lieutenants
- 7 corporals in the rank of first sergeants
- 110 halberdiers in the rank of sergeants
- 2 drummers in the rank of sergeants

The first sergeant has understood the inquiring glance of the recruit and explains to him that the full strength of 133 men is reached at special occasions, e.g. in the Holy Year. To the inquiry about the two different ranks, he explains that the Pope has four guards:

the Noble Guard, founded on May 11, 1801, consisting of 70 men;

the Swiss Guard;

the Palatine Guard of Honor; founded on December 14, 1850, consisting of 500 men;

The Papal Gendarmes (police corps), founded on October 22, 1816, consisting of 157 men.

Soldiers of the Swiss Guard have the rank of sergeant according to the superior position of the Guard as compared with the Palatine Guard and the gendarmes. The Swiss Guard accepts philosophically the fact that in the official position in the Vatican, he comes after the Noble Guard. These Noble Guards come from Noble families who in ancient times gloriously defended the liberty of the Church. This gives them privileges at the Papal Court. However, we of the Swiss Guard feel no minority complex when meeting the son of a nobleman. Like the brave Melchtal to Rudenz in Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, the Swiss would say,

"Here is my hand. The peasant's handclasp, noble Sir, is worth a noble's word. What were the knights without us? And our caste is older far than yours."

At the tailors of the Guard, the newcomer tries on the formal and the drill uniform. The formal dress in the three heraldic colors of the Medici popes (red, yellow, blue) is the costume of sixteenth century mercenaries, perhaps slightly adapted to the palace service by Raphael. It consists of a doublet of yellow and blue stripes with two red slits on the breasts. The red sleeves, puffed on the upper arm, are covered with yellow and blue ribbons. The tight lower part of the sleeve, which is also striped yellow and blue, shows red cuffs on the wrist. The red baggy breeches coming down over the knee are also adorned with yellow

and blue stripes. Yellow and blue cloth gaiters and black shoes, a white ruff, and a blue sixteenth century-style beret complete the uniform. On Sundays, a black helmet with red plume; on special days a helmet of white metal in the style of the same century is worn instead of the beret. Normally, the Guard on duty wears the formal uniform. On special holidays and at the reception of sovereigns, a steel cuirass is added.

In the depot of arms, the soldier gets halberd and sword, rifle, bayonet, and cartridge pouch, and a Mauser for gundrill. Sharp ammunition is stored at the sentry — partly in ammunition boxes, partly in cartridge belts. The Mausers were presented to the corps by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany.

Led by his older comrades, our recruit spends the afternoon of his first day touring the Vatican. The beauties of the Eternal City overwhelm him. Frequently, one complains the first day, "Captain, it is simply too much, I cannot take it in. All these new names, the foreign language, the new service. Let alone art — I don't even know what art is." Yet in a few weeks, he will realize that he has acquired an appreciation and understanding not only of what he saw that first day but of much more. With a great many new impressions and quite lost in wonder, he concludes the first day in the papal Swiss Guard.

CHAPTER V ON GUARD

The first day of sentry duty is an interesting experience. At seven o'clock every day, guards line up in the court yard of the barracks. With the young recruit we are now watching the changing of the Guard. On the command "fall in" the platoon on duty lines up in two ranks in front of the sergeant. After inspection, he marches with the detachment to the Bronze Gate, where guards change. The departing men go to breakfast, to holy Mass, and then to tidy up their rooms, arms, and uniforms.

But let us go back to the new sentries. They have to watch five gates.

1. *The Portone di Bronzo*, with ten men who have the task of directing applicants for audiences to the office of the master of the chambers, to do military salutes, and to prevent unauthorized persons from passing.
2. *The Carlo Magno* with six men. Visitors to audiences who arrive by car pass this post and come to

3. *The Zecca*, the former mint of the Vatican, with four men. This gate separates the Vatican gardens from the papal palace. The sentry controls traffic.

4. *The Saal*, called thus, because the ten men on duty here are accommodated in the Sala Clementina. This room might be called the lobby of the papal palace.

5. *The St. Anna* with four men. It is the ordinary entrance of the Vatican for its inhabitants. Here is the church of St. Anna, a beautiful baroque building, the parish church of the Vatican as distinguished from St. Peter's, the world church.

Let us now consider the place the Swiss Guard take in the Pope's Day.

A DAY WITH THE POPE

A day with the Pope begins at six-fifteen with a few moments of prayer. Like an American businessman, the Holy Father shaves himself with an electric razor. His birds, two canaries and a finch, Gretel, accompany the sound of the motor with a morning song. They fly to his hand and shoulder; they are the little friends of the Franciscan-minded Pope.

At eight o'clock, when the new sentries of the Swiss Guard are already drawn up at the Bronze Gate, Pius XII has celebrated Mass. For his thanksgiving, he attends a Mass celebrated by one of his secretaries. The Holy Father keeps to his daily routine as closely as a Swiss watch. This routine includes a tremendous correspondence; the Pope receives a ton of letters each day. It also includes serious study, ranging from the Scriptures to the *New York Times*. If Pius XI once said, "Better a dead Pope than a Pope who cannot work," every person in the Vatican knows that these words suit Pius XII too. He permits himself few comforts in life, taking his meals in solitude, and maintaining a constant spirit of recollection and prayer. Every week he humbly kneels to make his Confession to an ordinary priest.

At nine o'clock, the private audiences begin. Ecclesiastical dignitaries and outstanding lay persons are received. These audiences bring a world of anxieties, problems, and responsibilities before the mental eye of the Pope.

They take place in the Pope's private library. It is adapted as study and reception room. However, not only dignitaries of the curia are

received in private audiences, but also visitors from all the world — statesmen, scholars, officers, artists come on courtesy visits or for important discussions. These audiences last sometimes until eleven-thirty. A bell-signal announces that the Holy Father has left his private library and that "special audiences" are beginning in the adjoining rooms. Small groups and individual persons are received in the so-called secret anti-chamber: the small throne room, hall of the popes, hall of St. John, and corner hall; larger groups are received in the large throne hall. In this hall, the Holy Father also receives diplomats who come to present their credentials. Staff officers of the Swiss and Palatine Guard do their service of honor here.

In the so-called handkiss audience, the Pope will go from one pilgrim to the other, everyone having a chance of exchanging a few words with him and of kissing the fisherman's ring on his hand. It may be twelve-thirty or one o'clock when the handkiss audiences start. The Noble Guards put on their helmets, a sign that the Pope will soon be there.

The dean of the sedari (chair-carriers) now comes into the hall with a list of names. One after the other he calls up all the people present and places them along the wall or in a semicircle. When there are new-married couples, the bridegroom stands at the right side of the bride. No gloves are worn. Women have to cover their heads with a veil or scarf.

For everyone, the moment when the Pope enters is unforgettable. His Holiness immediately begins a friendly conversation with those kneeling in the front of the room. Then he goes from one to the other, perhaps there are twenty, perhaps there are a hundred or more, who wait in this and the adjoining halls. For each of them, he has a friendly word. He encourages one; he answers a question; he dries tears with prudent advice; he puts his hand on the curly head of a child; he makes the sign of the cross over a cripple.

The Holy Father evidences keen interest in people and has a unique memory. When the late Arch Ward, sports editor of the *Chicago Tribune* and mastermind of American baseball and football, had an audience with Pius XII before the war, he asked the Pope's prayers for his sick daughter. Two years ago the sports writer revisited Rome. The Holy Father's memory hurried back over ten years and hundreds of thousands of visitors and he asked, "How is your little daughter, Mr. Ward?"

Non-Catholics, of course, are not expected to genuflect before the Pope. This is often explained to them, but usually they kneel spontane-

ously. They kiss the ring and in that moment forget their own prejudices. These non-Catholics may feel what the French Prime Minister Thiers experienced more than a hundred years ago. This Protestant had come to Rome and applied for an audience, on condition that he would not be obligated to genuflect. Pope Gregory XVI let him be told he could behave as he liked. When the statesman came before the papal throne, he knelt down. In his polite gentle way, the Pope asked him, "Your Excellency, did you stumble over something?" To this, the prime minister replied quickwittedly, "Yes, Your Holiness, over the greatness of papacy."

And then there was that Protestant minister from my native country who decided to interview the Pope. I explained to him the customary genuflection and the traditional kissing of the Fisherman's ring. "But since you aren't Catholic," I told him, "this would hardly be expected of you."

"Don't worry," he replied, "you wouldn't catch me genuflecting to any pope." Five minutes later, Pius entered the audience chamber and the pilgrims began meeting him individually. The minister, clearly moved by the presence of his Holiness, genuflected reverently when his turn came and remained on his knees during the whole audience.

There is hardly a tourist or pilgrim who leaves the Vicar of Christ without being deeply moved or spiritually enriched. Thousands and hundreds of thousands who flocked to audiences after the war, in order to greet St. Peter in his 261st successor or only in order to see the Pope because he is a "great man," have affirmed the above statement.

It is obvious that the guards witness many beautiful and touching moments. An example may prove this. One day a group of members of the Third Order of St. Dominic had come for an audience. They nearly filled the whole room and thus the Holy Father overlooked the smallest of them, a dwarf of hardly more than four feet. When the Pope was leaving, he cried after him, "Holy Father, give me your blessing too; I am the smallest member of my Order." The Pope turned around and gave him his hand to be kissed and the blessing he had asked for. However, the dwarf was not satisfied with that. He did not let the Pope's hand go, pulled out a tiny crucifix from his breast-pocket and said, "Before my father died, he gave this golden crucifix to me and he kissed it. Holy Father, would you, please, kiss this little crucifix, too. I shall do the same afterwards and then I have the impression of having again a father." The Holy Father stooped down to the dwarf, took the crucifix from the trembling hand and kissed it with devotion. This scene

was so touching, genuine, and sincere that many a hardened dignitary was not ashamed of a tear. "My friend, now you must not cry any more," said the Pope, "you have once more a father." During these few moments, I felt that not only this dwarf but the whole of mankind, especially in these times of strife, has still a father who does not forget us; one who prays, sacrifices, and suffers for us. Yes, a father who once said to a Nazi ambassador, "We are doing our duty, even at the risk of being put in a concentration camp." He is the father whom the communists called a war criminal and who answered, "I am blessing those who calumniate me, for the love of the father of Christendom is still greater than the hatred of his enemies." Yes, here is a *HOLY Father!*" I saw and heard him pray for good priests, and I know he himself is as he desires priests to be:

"an angel of purity, subordinating every human love, no matter how tender and holy, to the divine love;

an angel of charity, renouncing the sweetness of an earthly family to create a bigger one, of which he will be the father and shepherd, in which the little ones, the unhappy, the burdened, the outcast will have the first claim on his affections;

an angel of light, to make faith in Christ shine like the morning star in the minds of men;

an angel of sacrifice, consumed like the flames of the holocaust for the good of his brethren;

an angel of counsel and comfort, to console them in sorrow, support them in their struggles, point out to them in the anxious hours of doubt the bright path of virtue and of duty;

an angel of grace, cleansing and uplifting souls, uniting them to Christ by distributing to them the bread of life;
an angel of peace, pouring into their hearts, as they breathe their last, the ineffable sweetness of the desire and love of Jesus, and opening for them, rapt in the ecstasy of Christ's embrace, the Gate of Heaven."

PIUS XII — Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood

For almost six years I lived as a guard and guard captain in the house of the common Father of Christendom. These were the most interesting years of my life, filled with glorious experiences. I like to call them "Fioretti," like the Fioretti di San Francisco, the "Flower col-

lection" of St. Francis. It was such a "Fioretto" when a little peasant in the simplicity of his mind and confidence during an audience asked the Holy Father to hear his confession. Pius XII took him to a distant corner of the audience hall. It was a most touching spectacle to see the great Pope serving this simple peasant as his confessor. We all felt that here is the pastor of souls in the person of the Pope. It likewise was a "Fioretto" when an outspoken enemy of the Pope came with a large crowd for an audience with the intention of gathering some material to be used in his attacks on the Pope, fell on his knees and asked for the Pope's blessing. We who witnessed this also know that this is the Father of all Christians.

Was it not another "Fioretto" when a pigeon found her way into the audience hall, excitedly flew around and at last settled on the back of the throne on which the Holy Father was sitting speaking to his audience!

Following the receptions, the Holy Father takes his simple lunch at about two o'clock. This consists of soup, a main course, and fruit. As soon as he enters the room, he opens the bird cage to free his two canaries and "Gretel." "Gretel," the finch that had fallen from a nest in the Vatican gardens, receives a few crumbs from the Holy Father's fingers. During the meal, it jumps onto his shoulders and keeps him company. Do not things like these remind one of St. Francis, his birds, and his fioretti, too?

Lunch time has also come for the guards. They change the black helmet which must always be worn during the audience time in Sala Clementina for the more comfortable and more classical beret. With the exception of the sentry and one extra guard, they leave for lunch.

Following his lunch, the Pope goes about his other duties and at four o'clock takes a walk in the Vatican gardens for about an hour. Rarely is the Holy Father seen without a book or a document in his hands. During the walk, he usually memorizes his speeches, which are characterised by their precise style and their well-chosen words, always adapted to the vocation, habits, and environment of the people addressed. Those to whom he speaks, admire his remarkable oratorical gift and the distinguished classical form of his speeches. With surprising psychological insight, he penetrates into the mental surroundings of his listeners and recognizes the task and duties of their lives and points out to each his particular apostolic task.

The Holy Father's holiness begets a continuous concern for the poor and oppressed. His motto is, "With charity for all!" He helps Catholics

and non-Catholics alike. I have watched him help them, foregoing heat in his home all through the winter "because the poor have not heat," and establishing summer and winter camps that have made a million little waifs happy. After the bombing of Rome in 1945, the Pope himself went to the assistance of the distressed with all the available money in the Vatican bank.

His charity is extended also to those who dwell in the darkness of error. *"Error must be fought with all our might, but the brother who errs must be loved intensely and brought to salvation."*

Apostolic Exhortation MENTI NOSTRAE,
NCWC translation.

Well I remember a cripple in the audience hall. Unnoticed, he squatted behind hundreds at the entrance of the room. He was happy just to see the Holy Father from a distance. But Pius XII stood up at his throne, approached him with great strides, and treated him like a brother whom he had not seen for years.

Often young mothers stand before the throne with children, whose fathers have been killed by bullets or bayonets. In such moments, we really understand why the Pope, bishops, and priests must remain unmarried. How else could they devote themselves so whole-heartedly to the flock entrusted to them! How soft and tender is the Pope's hand when it rests on the head of the little half-orphans and makes a cross on their foreheads, mouths, and breasts!

I remember one morning when hundreds of little children came to see him. Never before did I see children like these. Little ones, between the ages of four and seven years, boys and girls, who could not smile any more. I just could not understand it. They all watched us with a very skeptical expression on their meager faces. Finally, I asked one of the dignitaries, "Please, tell me what happened to them." — He told me, "They live in the ruins of Rome. During the day they hide. In the evening they come out and go around, trying to find some food and clothes. A few kind people brought them to the Palace so that they might see the Holy Father." — In that moment Pius XII entered the Sala Clementina. He had a little speech prepared. But he did not speak. He just watched his little visitors, and his eyes filled with tears. They too watched him in silence. They never saw him before. They did not know the meaning of the words "Holy Father" or "Pope." Suddenly a little girl, about four years old, walked over to him. There she knelt down on the marble floor, folded her tiny hands, and said: "Please, would you come and stay with us in the ruins? We are so much afraid."

But if you would come and stay with us, we would no longer be afraid." — This child felt it immediately, "if this kind man would come and stay with us, we would have a father again."

But let us return to the day with the Pope. After the walk in the Vatican gardens, he continues his work in the palace. He receives one of his secretaries to discuss with him important problems, takes a simple supper of eggs and vegetables, says the rosary with those closest to him, again continues with his work, says the remainder of his Office just as any other Catholic priest does, and finally retires. Sometimes this is at midnight, often at one, two, or even three o'clock in the morning. The Pope's day is frequently a twenty-hour day.

Among my many memories of service at the Vatican is my first night on sentry duty. I had been assigned to service number six, Carlo-magno. Number six was considered a "bad" number. The soldier with that number could sleep from eight o'clock in the evening until midnight, was a sentry until three o'clock in the morning and could again go to sleep until six. During the summer months it was too hot to sleep at eight and when one could find a nap, a comrade would come to awaken him with "Anton, it is midnight, it is your turn." Yes, number six was a bad number! However, I liked it. It gave me time to study during those quiet hours. At night, the guard can sit at a table and read and write as the gates are closed. Frequently I traded for that famous number six and had my Italian or Latin lesson (about thirty cents) paid for through the deal. It was a good number for me, even on that first night.

At about two o'clock in the morning, I noticed the lights still burning behind two windows of the papal apartment. To me, that seemed unusual. In my report to the Sergeant I said, "It seems that someone forgot to turn out the lights." He just smiled. "You are quite green, I can see that. That is the Holy Father. You can see those lights on almost every night at this time." And then that sergeant told me, and it was not an order but more like a moral obligation, "Let us kneel down together. We are the Pope's bodyguards. Let us help him carry his burden. Let's say a rosary for him!" We knelt down together and said a rosary. That night I didn't do much studying of irregular Italian verbs. But I felt that now I was a real bodyguard of the Pope. I felt mighty proud and happy for I realized that I had in the rosary the most powerful weapon of the Swiss Guard. This was, indeed, my finest hour!

We called that Sergeant "il Santo Teodoro," the holy Theodor. Everybody in the Vatican who knew him called him that. We liked to

watch him; even before breakfast he would have from fifty to a hundred poor people waiting for him in our barracks. There were old men and women, cripples, neglected and starving children in rags always waiting for him. When he did come, he looked like Santa Claus, his pockets and arms filled with bread, cookies, clothes. His friends would cry out at the sight of him, "Il Santo Teodoro"! In payment, his "children" would say prayers for him that day, but even the looks in their eyes, their cries of "Grazie, grazie," were payment enough. Those of us in the Guard were proud to have such a saintly man with us. He was a man whose life consisted in prayer, charity, and sacrifice. His duty with the Guard he did well, too. Considered the finest sportsman in the Vatican, he was both respected and loved. Not many weeks ago, I was happy to hear through the Right Reverend Monsignor Carroll of the NCWC that a fine oil painting of Teodoro now adorns the living-room of the Bishop of Columbus. If humble Teodoro, my best and truest friend knew that, he would perhaps ask with tears that it be destroyed. Teodoro's only wish in this life is to do everything "ad maiorem Dei gloriam — for the greater glory of God." However, it seems to me that that picture is in the right place.

During my service with the guard, I accumulated enough amusing and interesting experiences to supply my nine children with bedtime stories. I remember, for instance, the American non-Catholic, highly excited over her approaching audience with the Holy Father, who couldn't remember the proper form of address. We told her to use either "Your Holiness" or simply, "Holy Father." When the eventful moment came, she smiled at him and said, "Good morning, Mr. Pope."

How can I forget my first assignment in the medieval armor, when together with my comrades, I accompanied the Italian King Umberto and his queen. I was so excited that morning that I didn't notice that at one moment I was standing on the royal lady's train! My former comrades still tease me about that incident.

As captain I had to help solve our commander's problem concerning Mrs. Evita Peron of Argentina. How should she be escorted? Ordinarily twelve guards in shining armor meet heads of states, and six meet ambassadors in formal uniform. Mrs. Peron was neither but a little of both. We were equal to the situation — nine guards in formal dress accompanied Argentina's first lady! And she was equal to the occasion, too. She made quite an impression on everybody.

In 1940 the German minister Von Ribbentrop came to the Vatican. He didn't bother to return the customary salute we guards offered as he

entered. To the proud Nazi's embarrassment, he collapsed after his interview with the Holy Father. When he left two hours later we noted with satisfaction that he kindly bid us farewell. Would he had accepted the lesson which the Holy Father possibly tried to teach him!

In 1948 when the communists threatened Italy in the national elections, we were told that the reds would try to take over the Vatican radio and broadcast misleading election returns. I told the boys that during the very afternoon we would probably write a second page of our history book; we would have to fight. I never saw such shining eyes before! Laying aside ancient halberts for modern weapons in order to give our visitors a hearty welcome, we were ready. However, that afternoon the commies stayed home.

The afternoon of one of my early service days I first saw the Holy Father. My comrades, a little jealous, told me I would see him, but that he would not see me. This seemed to be the thing to expect. At that time my father was quite ill. I wanted to receive the Holy Father's blessing for him, for myself, and for all the members of my family. Of course, if he did not see me, he wouldn't give me his blessing. At four in the afternoon, Pius XII would leave his palace through the elevator entrance. His personal driver waited for him with the car in the Damasus square. The elevator was too far away for the Pope to notice the guard saluting him with kniefall, that is to say, kneeling in a military fashion (a beautiful salute). What should I do? I prayed very hard and, I think, quite well. I had one hour before he would come out. At four o'clock, the papal gendarmes on the square signalled that the Pope was approaching. They rapped the sword on the pavement so that it could be heard three hundred yards away. The sign means "everybody out" who does not have a right to stay here. I still didn't know what to do. The door opened. I saw Pope Pius for a moment. He didn't see me! I was sad. But in another hour he would be back. I determined to try again. A few more rosaries would help. I would not miss one word. As the Irish say, "Let the devil not go between!" At five the Holy Father came back. How could I attract his attention? I didn't know. Again I saluted kneeling down. In this moment, an inspiration came. I put my halbert on the floor causing a loud noise. But the Holy Father was already in the elevator. I was still kneeling there. Were my prayers really for nothing? It could not be; I had prayed to our Lady for a noble purpose, and as a boy I had learned that it is absolutely impossible that she does not hear a noble prayer. Then something incredible happened. The Holy Father did come back. He smiled. Slowly he uplifted his hand and gave me his blessing.

As a young soldier of the Swiss Guard I was aware of the tremendous struggle of Pius XII for peace. Again and again he would exclaim, "Nothing is lost with peace; everything will be lost with war." The dictators didn't listen to him. Mussolini proudly or sarcastically said to Ciano, "I will soon have to teach the Pope how to govern the Church." And Hitler, the dictator, once made the statement, "We shall stamp the priests to simple criminals." Thus war came!

I stood on the Piazza Venezia on that dread tenth of June in 1940 when Mussolini asked half a million people from the balcony of his palazzo, "What do you wish, bread or cannons?" And I can still hear the prepared applauding squad shouting like crazy, "Cannoni! cannoni! Give us cannons!" By mass suggestion that cry was soon multiplied; in a moment hundreds of thousands of people were shouting, "Cannoni." Mussolini, like a Roman emperor, saluting with outstretched hand, continued. "All right, I will give you cannons." In that moment, the war began. My impression was, "Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant! — Hail, Caesar, those who are going to die salute you!" Soon thousands would die because that leader refused to listen to the Vicar of Christ.

A few days later, when the vicinity of Rome was attacked by night and the Fascist government was unable to protect the people; they came in great crowds to the Holy Father, expressing again and again that one wish, "Dateci la pace! Give us Peace!" Back in those days I saw him more than once with tears in his eyes. I understood how he suffered because he couldn't help; and we guards suffered with him. It was a difficult time of spiritual sufferings, a time which I would gladly forget.

As captain, I frequently encountered the sentry at midnight at the entrance gate of the private apartment of the Holy Father, walking up and down, the old halbert in one hand, and a rosary in the other.

A more inventive soldier made ten notches in his wooden halbert. That was his rosary!

Still another told me that looked too complicated to him. He had found that the handle of his bayonet already had ten notches.

Two Swiss guards accompany the Pope into the gardens in the afternoon and keep watch unobtrusively. Other guards who are not on sentry duty, sit on the benches reading books or newspapers and stand to attention and present arms only now and then, when a cardinal or bishop residing in the Vatican passes. Only three cardinals reside in the Vatican — the cardinal secretary of state, the head of the Vatican library, and the head of the economic commission for Vatican City, so there isn't too much activity on ordinary afternoons.

However, afternoons and evenings are not always passed so quietly. Perhaps six or seven times a year, hundreds of thousands, participants in Catholic congresses, assemble in the afternoon on St. Peter's Square to await the Pope.

Just a few weeks ago a little boy asked me, "Would you please tell us, is it nice to be the Pope?" I first told him that I could hardly answer such a question. Then I remembered the morning, many years ago, when another little fellow had asked the same question of the Holy Father himself.

It was one of those beautiful October mornings when the sky over Rome appears in a blue which I seldom saw anywhere else in the world. The thousands of pilgrims who had come to see the Holy Father hailed his coming with a rousing, "Eviva Il Papa! — Long live the Pope!" There was a little Roman boy in the audience who had promised his mother he would be silent during the audience. "If you put me on your arm, Mommy, I won't speak!" I can still see him sitting on his mother's arm like a king on a throne. The Holy Father came to the mother and child. In the excitement of the moment, little Pepino forgot his promise and shouted at the top of his voice, "Holy Father, I am here too!" His mother gave him a little shove, "Stupido, I told you not to speak!" But it was too late. The Holy Father had seen him and heard him. "Well, I can see that. I am glad that you came, too."

Then Pepino continued, "I want to tell you something."

"Just go ahead," the Pope smiled.

"I like it here, Holy Father. You know, when I become a grown-up man, I wish to become a Pope too!"

The Holy Father looked at his young visitor with a sad smile. He said only two words in Italian, "Povero ragazzo — You poor boy!" People still shouted around them. Pepino could not understand.

"But, please, is it not nice to be the Pope?"

The Holy Father, uplifting his hand again for the blessing, answered slowly, still smiling sadly, "No, it isn't. It isn't at all!" Then he walked toward the throne.

My own children saw the Pope in a handkiss audience when they were still very small. Antonio, my personal little "bodyguard," was a month old when he had his first "private audience." I can still see the Holy Father putting his almost transparent hand on the little forehead of the baby. When my children now see a picture of Pius XII, they say with deep devotion, "Bapi, this is the Holy Father." They saw him only

a few times, but they will never forget him. Antonio and Peter have already made up their minds. They will, of course become Swiss Guards, too. And "Bapi" will not say no!

As a young Swiss Guard I had in Rome a very fine friend, Father van Laak. He was an outstanding professor at the papal University Gregoriana. He came one afternoon each week to our chapel in order to hear the confessions of the Swiss Guards. He was also the confessor of the Holy Father.

Father van Laak invited me often to come to visit him for several hours, an invitation I was only too glad to accept. I would stay some times, not for two or three hours but for five or six or longer. He would tell me stories about the great saints of his Order. Eighty years old, his spirit was still that of a young man. Frequently unable to sleep because of intense sufferings, he spent the silent hours of the night on his knees before a crucifix in contemplation of the sufferings of Christ. It was such a pleasure and happiness to be in the presence of this great Jesuit.

When eight o'clock would come, I would tell him that it was time to leave. He would answer with a smile, "You have still half an hour." Finally he would accompany me to the door, walking very slowly as every step was pain to him. Opening the door and turning toward me he would say without a smile — "Please, Anton, do not forget; you must pray more for the Holy Father!" I would promise, step out of the room and go to the elevator. That plea would follow me. It follows me now. "Tell it to everybody, any time, anywhere. Everyone must pray more for the Holy Father. He cannot carry his tremendous burden alone!" Shortly before this dear priest died, I visited him for the last time. Never have I seen such a happy man. Overjoyed, he said to me, "Anton, soon I shall die and go to heaven! There I shall pray for the Holy Father!"

Here was the man who knew the heart of the Holy Father better than any other person. Here was the man before whom the Vicar of Christ knelt every Saturday afternoon, folded his hands and said in all humility, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

I have written this incident because I promised old Father van Laak to "tell it to anybody, any time, anywhere, that we must pray more for the Holy Father." I can imagine that saintly priest watching me from heaven as I write these lines, and smiling, as he smiled when I visited him. He smiles because Anton has kept his promise.

One night on the Piazza di San Pietro, 300,000 young men united in prayer. At midnight, they attended holy Mass, sang their songs to the glory of God, and received Holy Communion. It was touching to hear these vigorous young men, representatives of many nations, say together that prayer which is a confession to God and faith and a challenge to the enemies of the cross: "Credo in unum Deum — I believe in one God." Eight days before, the Pope had gathered round him 300,000 girls from all parts of the world in the same place. He asked them to be pure, to come out from their seclusion and to take part in the fight, that is, in the defense of the dignity of the woman.

Anyone who has had the privilege of assisting at the meetings on St. Peter's Square is grateful that God has called him to live in these difficult and yet wonderful days, days which demand full determination and resolution, make no allowance for slackness, and by enforcing clear decisions unmask pretension and form heroic characters. Thus while the young guard performs his special and unusual service of honor, he is influenced by these impressive gatherings, landmarks in his life and in the life of the Church.

In Rome I also learned to know the fascist youth as well as the German Hitler youth. With what enthusiasm did these boys and girls accept this false gospel of "soil and blood!" They were taught to dethrone the true God and to adore in His place false gods. Then these idols were destroyed and so was their fiery faith in them. These Hitler Youths and fascists youths stood before a nothing, a vacuum. Now, they laboriously try to find and fashion a new Credo, uncertain whether they are right or wrong. The result is that many former members of the fascist or Hitler youth have entered the ranks of communism, hoping there to find the right answers.

Normally all gates of the Vatican are closed at ten o'clock at night. The sentries are drawn in, arms put in the rack. On each post there is one guard during the night who fills the slowly moving hours with study and interesting reading. During this time the guard, perhaps, writes to his parents or his future fiance and wife on the unique events of his day at the papal court. Every two or three hours, he is relieved. The duty hours are arranged so that every guard can sleep at least eight hours a night. Each new day is different from the one just finished. There will be a new set of visitors, but the routine of the Holy Father and his Guard remain the same. Even though words are not often exchanged with him, the guards feel close to him. He has expressed this same sentiment many times himself. He is called the "servant of the servants of God." He calls us co-servants, those who serve with him.

On a morning in May in 1949, I knelt for the last time as officer before Pope Pius XII. I was leaving the service for additional military instruction in the Swiss army, and from that to go out into the world to bring him closer to people. Like a father he put his hands on my head and gave me his special blessing. I solemnly promised him to remain always true to him and to God.

CHAPTER VI

AN OFF-DUTY DAY

Two days of service are followed by one off-duty day. After the drill in the fresh air, leisure hours are devoted to the study of various languages, singing, music, knowledge of Rome, history, etc. Professors usually come to the guard quarters and sit with their students in some quiet corner.

A guard is a good sportsman. Recently a small football team has been organized. The first match was played against the Abyssinians of the Papal College. Result: (I confess it in all humility) 10-4 in favor of the colored team!

Mental training is cared for in the extensive Guard library. Important newspapers and publications provide information on events at home and in the rest of the world. Some of these newspapers have guards among their contributors. Our off-guard motto is that of the old Romans: *Mens sana in corpore sano. A healthy mind in a healthy body*, and it works!

CHAPTER VII

IN SAINT PETER'S

Undoubtedly the most beautiful experience for the Guard is a Pontifical High Mass in St. Peter's Cathedral.

In the early morning, before the first worshippers have entered the basilica, the Swiss guards are at their posts around the tomb of St. Peter. Led by an officer they are drawn up as at the swearing in.

In indescribable beauty, harmony and greatness the dome of St. Peter's arches over the tomb of the simple fisherman from the Holy Land. At six when the doors are opened throngs of people come pouring in — often as many as 50,000 — to attend the Pope's Mass and to listen to his words.

At the moment when the Holy Father crosses the threshold of the basilica, a thousand small lamps are lighted in the interior. A ten thousand-fold cry of inspired enthusiasm soars up to the beloved Pontifex: "Long live the Pope!" Again and again he raises his hand in blessing.

Now he leaves his throne and walks to the altar steps to celebrate Holy Mass. It is a deeply moving experience to listen to the first priest of the world praying in a time of modern persecution: "Be the advocate of my lawful cause against an unholy people. God, save me from wicked and false men!"

After the Sanctus has been sung, a few quick commands echo through the Church. The Palatine Guard presents arms and the Noble and Swiss Guards fall on their right knee and salute with one hand, extending swords or halberds with the other hand. 50,000 people fold their hands. In the spacious interior absolute silence reigns. The Holy Father inclines his head over the Host, a small white piece of bread, which he holds in his consecrated hands and over which he utters the portentous words: "This is My Body." Then he himself kneels, adoring his Lord and Master. Next he rises, holding the Savior high above the representatives of mankind. A soul-stirring melody floats down into the basilica from silver trumpets played high up the dome.

Since I am not able to describe the beauty of a Pope's Mass, I should like the Protestant poet Schiller to do it for me. In his drama *Mary Stuart* he has the following enthusiastic lines: "Imagine my ecstasy when I stepped into the interior of the church and when the music of heaven descended, when I saw the Pope in all his splendor, pontificating High Mass and blessing the people! What is the splendor of gold and jewels with which mundane kings crown themselves compared with him who alone is surrounded by the Divine? A veritable empire, heaven is his home — for such beings are not from this world!"

The Pope's Solemn Mass in St. Peter's is an unforgettable experience for the pilgrim to Rome. All the splendor and glory of the Church, the light and color, music and joy form together an enduring picture. It is not without reason that a high dignitary has said he had felt at the entrance of the Pope, what Dante sings in the first stanza of his *Paradise*:

"Within this heaven which most his light receives
Was I, and things beheld which to repeat
Nor knows, nor can, who from above descends."

CHAPTER VIII

CASTELGANDOLFO

It is an old truth that there are no holidays for a Pope. Pius XII does not call his stay in Castelgandolfo from August until October a vacation, but merely a change of air. There is almost as much business going on

as in the Vatican. The only difference is that there are no tabled audiences. Seventeen guards and a sergeant are taking over the sentry-duty, shortly before the Pope's arrival in the Apostolic palace. The piquet is relieved every fortnight from the Vatican. Meanwhile service in the Vatican is carried on normally.

The history of Castelgandolfo goes back as far as the time of the Roman Emperor Domitian (81 — 96) when a stately villa on the volcanic crater over Lake Alban served the emperor as a refuge from the troublesome summer heat. Castelgandolfo really offers peace and relaxation to one like the Pope so overburdened with work and anxieties.

From the Belvedere, the well kept garden, we look into the distance to Rome, down to the coast at Ostia, to Tivoli and the Roman Castelli and finally to the vine-covered hillsides, to Tusculum and the distant mountains. Where once the bubbling lava killed all life, now lies the Lago di Albano, a picture of peace and quiet. Huge remnants of the walls of Domitian's extensive castle are still standing. In 816 the Genoese aristocratic family Gandulfi built a castle in the same place. From this family the little town derived its name. In 1585 it became a duchy with its environments, and in 1596 it came to the Holy See under Clement VIII. Under Pope Urban VIII in 1629 the Swiss architect Maderna built on the ruins of the castle of the Gandulfi the villa of today, called Palazzo Apostolico. In the course of centuries it was used more or less as a papal summer residence; eleven pontiffs found rest and new strength in the fresh air of Castello. One, thus chronicles tell us, would spend much time of the day on horse back; another would say Mass in a simple parish church and examine the children in their catechism knowledge. And still another would walk through the section of the villages where the poor live and help them.

With the year 1896 a new era started for Castelgandolfo. The papal castle was, like the rest of the papal state, incorporated to the Italian kingdom by Victor Emmanuel II under the slogan "*Italia Unita*." The spacious halls, the private rooms of the Pope, the entire estate served for a long time merely as a museum. The castle decayed after a few years.

Thus Pius XI in 1929 after the conclusion of the Lateran treaty with Italy had the choice — either to exchange his claim to the Castello in favor of the Farnese Castle of Caparola, or to build a new villa in place of the old decayed one. He had the whole castle repaired in its appropriate style by a capable architect. The summer residence of

today is his work. The engineers Ratti and Castelli, as well as the present director of the castle, Commendatore Bonomelli have left proof there of their technical skill.

A greater, more extensive restoration was necessary in 1945. The 3,000 to 4,000 refugees who were allowed to use the castle during the entire war naturally caused a certain amount of wear to the rooms. By a heavy bomb attack the farm belonging to the villa — one of the most beautiful model farms of middle Italy — was partially destroyed.

This farm, rebuilt after the war, can well be compared to a Wisconsin dairy farm.

Famous is the Pontifical Astronomical Observatory at Castelgandolfo, which is managed and staffed by scientists and scholars of the Society of Jesus.

CHAPTER IX

THROUGH THE FORUM ROMANUM

From Castelgandolfo we return to Rome by way of the ancient Via Appia. Along this 2200-year-old road the apostles Peter and Paul may have entered the Eternal City in order to conquer for Christ the then greatest empire. They fought with strange weapons: with prayer, sacrifice and the shedding of their own blood.

We stop to muse for a few moments over the ruins of the Forum Romanum. This was once the most splendid center of the most magnificent empire, laden with gold and marble, decorated with statues, arches of triumph, columns and temples. On the Palatine Hill, the ruins of the emperors palace still tells us of its once immense size. All this has crumbled to pieces.

Often I was privileged to conduct missionaries who returned from all parts of the world through this old Roman Forum. I shall never forget a veteran missionary of the Divine Word Fathers, who had returned from China. For forty years he had worked for his people and in one hour his whole life's work was destroyed by the Communists. They even hung him on a tree which he himself had planted thirty years before. "Will our little chapels in China ever rise above the Buddha and the pagan temples?", he mused in his mind as he looked out over the Roman Forum. Suddenly he broke into tears. Here was his answer: "Here on this very spot the Roman Christian communities were ten times decimated in a period of three hundred years, not only just twice as in China in the past fifty years!" And turning to me he said with deep conviction. "Captain, I have only one wish: to go out again and to start over again, for Christ will also be victorious in China."

When I would meet such a missionary I was always tempted to give him my Captain's uniform, for I felt that such a one is a true soldier of Christ and the Pope.

Near the Forum Romanum we enter the Coliseum, perhaps the most imposing place of sacrifice in all Christendom. It is said that more than 200,000 Christians bled to death here. The Church of this time, of the early centuries is often called the Church of the Catacombs, as if the Christians usually spent their days in hiding. Let us hear what the Holy Father is teaching about these times. On September 8, 1947, he addressed half a million men gathered in St. Peter's Square: "These subterranean cemeteries (The Catacombs) which served for burial of the deceased Christians were, indeed, sometimes used as a hiding place during the persecution. But even during those first centuries in which the blood of many Christians flowed they lived most of the time quite in public, in their homes and in the streets. 'They lived not apart from the world,' Tertullian says (Apol. xlii) but just as other citizens; they visited the market place, the baths, the workshops, the stores, the halls, the public squares; their professions and trade were not different from the others, they were soldiers, farmers, businessmen or worked in the marble quarries. If one were to picture the intrepid Church of the first centuries, which was always ready to mount the breach, as an underground society whose members, out of small-minded shame, always remained in hiding, one would do them great injustice, and their courageous behavior would give him the lie. The first Christians were fully aware of their duty to conquer the world for Christ, to reform private and public life according to the doctrine and the law of the Divine Savior. That way a new society should come into existence, a new Rome should arise upon the tombs of the princes of the Apostles. They gained their object: Rome and the Roman Empire became Christian.

"Because the first Christians never ceased to penetrate again and again into the pagan world, the Church which started in the most humble circumstances gradually grew and expanded — despite persecution and martyrdom — until, finally, after three centuries of struggle, the powerful Roman Empire had to acknowledge defeat and made an honorable peace with the Catholic Church."

With pleasure we remember these words of Pope Pius XII walking through the Forum Romanum, the Coliseum and the Catacombs.

Here in the Forum the temples of the Gods were crowned with the cross of the Savior. They became Christian houses of worship. For a

second time we read the inscription in the base of the obelisk on St. Peter's Square: *Christus vincit — Christ rules*. We read these words in the stones of ancient and modern Rome. Rome, capitol of Christianity with its ruins is an open book of history hewn out of rock. The truth of this inscription, *Christus vincit*, shines out on every page of this book.

In the Coliseum, now stands a cross: a *Christus Vincit*.

Adjoining the destroyed temples of the Gods were soon built the most magnificent temples of Christianity, as the Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Paolo fuori le mura, Santa Croce: *Christus Vincit!*

The statues of gods and goddesses, which used to look down from an unapproachable distance on a Rome demoralized and turned barbarian were cast from their pedestals by the storms of the times. The pedestals were soon to be replaced by statues of the Redeemer and his Saints. On St. Peter's Square a marble figure of the first Pope has been erected. Most likely this statue stands on the very same spot where St. Peter was crucified. And so these statues, too, represent a powerful *Christus Vincit*.

The Swiss Guard in the Vatican is to be envied. The history of Rome convinces him of the invincibility of the Church. The words of the Holy Father, to whom he can so often listen, remind him ever so often of the words of the Savior Himself. He is made to see the universality of the Church in the representatives of all peoples and races. The longer he stays in the Vatican, and the more attentive he is to what he witnesses the more he realizes that his guard service is a service rendered to the Savior. At the moment he becomes aware of this he enters the stage of maturity. Now he appreciates the fact that also to him is said: "Go ye to all nations, and teach all peoples." This at least has been my own innermost conviction. The Holy Father had this mandate to the Catholic layman expressed in his radio allocution immediately after his election when he said:

"When Catholics are not aware of their duty with regard to the non-Catholics throughout the world, this is a defeat in their Catholic mentality. MISSIONARY SPIRIT AND CATHOLIC SPIRIT ARE SYNONYMOUS. A CATHOLIC CANNOT FEEL INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH THE CHURCH IF HE DOES NOT DESIRE TO SPREAD THE FAITH AND MAKE THE CHURCH MORE UNIVERSAL." *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXI (1939, p. 635.)

And no less are these inspiring papal words addressed to 3,000 young people of Catholic Action meant for the members of the Swiss Guard.

"YOU WANT TO BE THE YOUTH OF THE POPE? ALL RIGHT, THEN, I WILL BE THE POPE OF THE YOUTH! BUT THEN I DEMAND FROM YOU CLEAR PRINCIPLES, PERSONAL COURAGE, AND A THOROUGHLY RELIGIOUS LIFE."

CHAPTER X

THE NEW TASK

Generally, following his service, the guard returns to the place
" . . . where joyfully his youth was spent, where childhood's sweetest memories abound and every tree and every brook is dear."

SCHILLER: *William Tell*

Some of the guards do not miss a chance of having their fiancée come to Rome, before they leave, in order to be married in the Guard Chapel, where for years, they have knelt every morning before Almighty God. For a last time, this soldier wears the classical uniform.

It sometimes happens that a former Guard returns to this little house of worship after he has been away for many years. Before the picture of the Sacred Heart he stands with head inclined. In years of prayer and sacrifice he has reached the highest mountain peak, higher even than Everest. He has become a priest! For the first time, surrounded by his former comrades, he says those solemn words, "Introibo ad altare Dei," and the Guard Chaplain, whose Mass he served hundreds of times, now answers him, "Ad Deum qui latetificat juventutem meam." In such a moment the Swiss Guard in the Chapel seems a Mystical Body of Christ in itself, with a visible Head and strong healthy members, united with each other through prayer, charity and love.

The departing Guard who does not become a priest acknowledged his new job, too. He has had a chance to learn the truth about the Vatican, the Holy Father, and the Catholic Church. It is for him now to defend this truth, "opportune, importune," be it welcome or not, wherever he has a chance to do so. As an open-minded lay-Christian, he will always loyally support the priest. According to the wishes of the Holy Father, he defends the Vicar of Christ first of all in his own heart. Then he strives to bring back to Christ as many immortal souls as he can. *Adveniat regnum tuum — Thy kingdom come,* this beautiful sentence of the "Our Father" is in order for him — the *New* order. Although our formal service is ended, we ever remain servants of the greatest Servant of humanity.

Again the Holy Father teaches us: "The Church has a threefold mission to fulfill for all: to raise up the fervent believers to the level of present day needs; to introduce those who hesitate on the threshold to the warm and salutary intimacy of the hearth and to lead back those who have separated themselves from religion and whom she cannot abandon to their miserable fate.

"An inspiring task for the Church! But it is one rendered more difficult by the fact that, while the Church as a whole has grown greatly, the number of clergy has not increased in proportion. Besides, the clergy must above all keep themselves free for the exercise of the sacred ministry proper to the sacerdotal state, which no one else can do for them.

"For that reason, assistance rendered by the laity to the apostolate is an indispensable necessity."

The Lay Apostolate—Its need today,
Pius XII, Oct. 14, 1951.

Thus our new flag is the banner of the love for Christ on which we write in indelible letters, "Fidelity to Christ's Vicar." Our job is to carry this flag to the Catholic youth of the world. This youth will become the youth of the Pope, the spiritual Swiss Guard. With spiritual weapons, with Mass and Communion, with the Rosary and a great and beautiful Catholic conviction, this youth will fight *the* battle of our time and according to the promise of the lovely Lady, dressed in blue," — there will be peace and not war, and the gates of hell shall not prevail." She, the Mother of Christ for whom we fight is always at our side,

*"Her image in our heart is graven surpassing sweet
and wondrous fair; it speaks to us of home and
heaven and Mother-love engraved is there!"*